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ABSTRACT

In 1991, a study was conducted to collect information regarding problems that graduates of two-year colleges with Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degrees encountered when transferring to four-year institutions. The study was motivated by an increasing number of A.A.S. degree recipients who were transferring to bachelor's programs even though their degree was not designed to transfer. Twelve two-year colleges in the Hudson Valley were contacted and asked to distribute questionnaires to a sample of A.A.S. graduates, who were thought to be planning to transfer to a four-year institution. Students were surveyed just prior to graduation and after transfer was completed. From the distribution of 246 questionnaires, 65 usable responses were received from students prior to graduation and 21 responses were returned from a post-transfer follow-up survey. Study findings included the following: (1) 33.8% of the respondents received their A.A.S. degrees in business areas; (2) 70.8% indicated that they did not have a choice of an Associate in Arts degree in their field of study; (3) 41.5% reported that they decided to pursue a four-year degree during their first semester of community college study; (4) 75% indicated that they were seeking a bachelor's degree for reasons related to work opportunities, higher wages, and advancement; and (5) 30% of the transfer students indicated that they had some problems transferring credits. These findings suggested that two-year colleges may have a limited window of opportunity to assist A.A.S. degree students in the transfer process if students make their plans known. (JMC)

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A.A.S. DEGREE STUDENTS TRANSFERRING
FROM SUNY TWO-YEAR COLLEGES
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY
(VEA 152-91-1863)

Introduction and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to collect information regarding the transfer process that graduates of two-year colleges with Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degrees encounter when transferring to four-year institutions. This study was motivated by an increasing number of A.A.S. degree recipients who are transferring to bachelor degree programs even though their degree was not designed to transfer. Information was sought directly from students by mail survey at two time points: the first just prior to graduation and the second in September when the transfer was completed.

During the spring semester 12 two-year colleges in the Hudson Valley were contacted and requested to distribute questionnaires to a sample of students receiving the A.A.S. degree and who, to the best of their knowledge, were planning to transfer to a four-year institution. Two hundred forty-six questionnaires were sent and, we assume, were distributed locally. The data collection packet consisted of a questionnaire (Appendix A) and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return. One item requested students to indicate whether or not they would be willing to again be contacted in September for additional information about their transfer experience, and if so, provide an address at which they could be contacted in September. The September data collection also utilized a mail questionnaire (Appendix B) and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Twelve colleges participated in the survey. The number of student responses from each institution ranged from a high of 20 to a low of 2, as illustrated by the following frequency summary.

College	%	n		%	n
Adirondack	- 10.8	(7)	Schenectady	- 3.1	(2)
Fulton-Montgomery	- 6.2	(4)	Sullivan	- 30.8	(20)
Hudson Valley	- 16.9	(11)	Cobleskill	- 10.8	(7)
Orange	- 6.2	(4)	Ulster	- 3.1	(2)
Rockland	- 9.2	(6)	Westchester	- 3.1	(2)

n = 65 total usable responses

Respondents by gender included 41.5% male, 53.8% female. The high school graduation year ranged from the mid-1960's through 1990 as illustrated:

Year graduated from high school:

1965-70 - 3.0%	1986-88 - 29.2%
1971-80 - 10.1%	1989 - 44.6%
1981-85 - 12.4%	1990 - 1.6%

Of the respondents, 92.3% provided a name, and 55 (84.6%) provided an address for September follow-up.

The most frequently identified program (33.8%) in which students were receiving their A.A.S. degrees were Business areas, including Accounting, Medical Secretary and Marketing. Criminal Justice/Legal Assistant areas were second most frequent, 18.4%, followed by Early Childhood, 13.8%, as subsequently detailed:

Major/Curriculum/Program:	% of Respondents
Business, Accounting, Medical Secretary, Marketing	- 33.8%
Criminal Justice, Legal Assistant	- 18.4%
Early Childhood	- 13.8%
Nursing, Dental Hygienist, Respiratory Care, Health	- 9.1%
Environmental, Science Technologies	- 7.7%
Computer, Data Processing	- 6.2%
Photography, Art, Broadcast Communication	- 6.1%
Culinary, Foods	- 3.1%
Civil Engineering	- 1.5%

Results - Spring Questionnaire

In the initial or spring questionnaire students were asked if they had a choice between the A.S. and the A.A.S. degree program in their field of

study. More than 70% (70.8%) indicated "No" compared to 27.7% who said "Yes" and 1.5% who were uncertain. Individuals responding positively were asked the reason for their selection of the A.A.S. degree. The primary reasons given reflected preference for courses or a less than firm career plan with some thoughts to pursuing a four-year degree, as shown by the following summary of responses:

Why did you select A.A.S. degree program?

10.7% Wanted a more challenging degree, wanted courses in A.A.S. program, better courses, less math in A.A.S.

6.1% Not sure of plans, did not plan on four-year college

3.1% Convenience, time; program

3.0% Advisor suggested to go for, no one explained difference

1.5% See if I could succeed in college

1.5% Told to pick a major after 12 hours (financial aid)

There was also interest in determining the decision point for continuance for a four-year degree. More than 40% (41.5%) indicated the decision was made during their first semester of enrollment at the two-year college, 21.5% second semester, 12.3% third semester, 13.8% fourth semester, and 9.2% indicated "Other." These responses suggest that for a majority of the respondents the transfer decision was made early, and obtaining a four-year degree was not a last minute decision. The major reasons given for seeking a bachelor's degree, as indicated by more than 75%, were related to work opportunities, higher wages and advancement. As subsequently shown, an additional 15% indicated a desire to expand horizons and education.

Reason to seek bachelor's degree:

75.4% More opportunity for advancement, higher paying job, qualified for better jobs, edge in competitive job market, need B.A. to achieve career goals

15.4% To obtain better education, to expand horizons

3.1% Enjoyed college and the field

3.0% To complete with parental financial assistance, to do it while have a chance in bad job market

1.5% Convenience, time, program

The questionnaire also asked whether or not a particular individual had helped in making the decision to continue. A majority (53.8%) responded positively, 46.2% negatively. Of those (n = 35) indicating that there was someone else, 14 identified family, 9 faculty, 6 college advisor, 4 employer and 2 a friend.

Respondents were asked which college and program they planned on entering in the fall. Sixty-three percent (63%) plan on transferring to SUNY colleges. The most frequently identified four-year colleges were SUNY institutions at Albany and New Paltz, an outcome reflective of the location of cooperating two-year colleges. The programs most frequently identified included Business, Elementary Education, Criminal Justice and Law, and generally reflected program areas in which students were enrolled at the two-year colleges. The colleges and programs selected are listed below by frequency:

College entering in fall:

SUNY Albany - 10.8%
SUNY New Paltz - 10.8%
SUNY Plattsburgh - 7.7%
SUNY Utica/Rome - 6.2%
SUNY Brockport - 6.2%
Ramapo (NJ) - 4.6%
Pace - 4.6%
Siena - 4.6%
St. Rose - 3.1%
Russell Sage - 3.1%
Rhode Island School of Design - 3.1%
SUNY Binghamton - 3.1%
SUNY Env. Sci/Tech - 3.1%
SUNY Stony Brook - 1.5%
SUNY Oswego - 1.5%
SUNY Purchase - 1.5%
SUNY Old Westbury - 1.5%
SUNY Cortland - 1.5%
SUNY Empire State - 1.5%
Culinary Institute - 1.5%
Penn State - 1.5%
Florida International - 1.5%
Staten Island - 1.5%
Iona - 1.5%
St. Thomas Aquinas - 1.5%
Lehman - 1.5%
Mount St. Mary - 1.5%
Union College - 1.5%
Hudson Valley - 1.5%

Program entering in fall:

26.1% Business, Accounting
15.4% Elementary Education
15.3% Criminal Justice, Law
7.6% Nursing, Public Health Administrator, Dietetics
6.2% Environmental Science
4.6% Photography, Illustration
4.6% Sociology
3.1% Computer
1.5% Civil Engineering
1.5% Political Science
1.5% Culinary Chef
1.5% Unsure

Students were also asked to indicate their primary reason for the selection of the four-year college. Program was the factor for 46%, location for about 15%, and about 14% indicated reputation.

Reason for choice of four-year college:

46.2% Program
15.4% Location
13.8% Reputation
9.2% Cost, campus
4.6% Faculty
3.1% Class size

Respondents were also asked if there were other colleges that they had also considered. Approximately 26% indicated that no other college was considered. Those that were considered included the following:

Other colleges most frequently considered:

26.2% None	1.5% Mount St. Mary
10.7% SUNY Albany	1.5% Mount Ida
6.1% St. Rose	1.5% Paie College of Art
5.6% SUNY Buffalo (College)	1.5% Cooper Union
3.1% Cornell	1.5% SUNY New Paltz
3.0% SUNY Plattsburgh	1.5% Geneseo
3.0% Russell Sage	1.5% SUNY Fredonia
3.0% Marist	1.5% UNLV
3.0% SUNY Binghamton	1.5% York
3.0% Pace	1.5% R.I.T.
3.0% SUNY Cortland	1.5% SUNY Utica/Rome
3.0% SUNY Oswego	1.5% Penn State
1.5% Keuka College	1.5% St. Thomas Aquinas
1.5% R.P.I.	1.5% Franklin Pierce

Respondents were asked whether they had encountered problems or difficulties regarding their plans to transfer; 43.1% indicated "Yes," 52.3% indicated "No." The types of problems encountered were divided into four categories: finances 30.8%; courses or program 23.1%; personal or family 7.7%; and other 13.8%. The description of problems encountered are summarized by category.

Description of problem:

Courses/Program:	16.8%	- Insufficient number of transferable credits, make-up classes of new major, lack liberal arts requirement, reject CLEP credits
	4.5%	- Unsure of requirements, major, acceptance
	1.8%	- Scheduling
Finances:	9.2%	- Limited, difficult to obtain support, harder than should be
	7.7%	- Insufficient funds to continue, cover cost of housing, books, private institution
	7.7%	- Ineligible for financial aid due to family income
	6.1%	- Must work (part and/or full-time) to pay tuition
Personal/Family:	6.0%	- Family responsibilities, difficulties
	1.5%	- No family where transferring

Other:

4.6% - Have not been able to speak with person in charge of program, lack of communication from college

3.0% - Must go 2½ to 3 years more, must enroll full-time and not work

3.0% - Program unavailable at chosen college, not accepted

1.5% - Must still fulfill core curriculum requirements

1.5% - Inadequate housing for older students

Respondents were asked if they were aware of whether all their associate degree credits would be accepted; 49.2% indicated "Yes," 47.7% "No," 1.5% "Don't Know." The explanation for these responses included:

Explain credit transfer knowledge:

26.0% All (64), most credits will transfer
24.5% Have not been notified as yet, no response, no communication
21.5% Not all, only a few, about 50% will, lack chemistry with biology
3.0% Have not yet applied

The last item asked whether or not they had any advice for students in an A.A.S. program that might be considering transfer to seek a bachelor's degree. The responses are subsequently summed. The most frequent recommendation was to become aware of any transfer agreements that exist between the two institutions.

Advice for A.A.S. students who might consider transfer:

20.0% Check to see if there is a transfer agreement between schools
17.0% Direct courses for transfer; if planning on bachelor's, do not seek degree in any area except liberal arts to avoid being behind; two-year classes are basic one must have thus be patient for desired classes
13.8% Study hard for good grades; stay focused on goal, motivated; get it before married

12.4% Begin work on transferring a year ahead (paperwork), research entry process, compare and learn about programs offered at four-year college, choose a school that is comfortable in all aspects, save money

7.5% Strive for bachelor's for a better job, worth it, sound investment

3.1% None

3.0% Computer, sociology, foreign language, business courses may be a plus

1.5% Seek an A.S. degree

Results - Fall Questionnaire

In September a follow-up questionnaire was mailed to the 55 respondents providing addresses. Responses were received from 21, a 38.2% response rate. Those who did respond to the fall survey were high school graduates from 1965 through 1989 with a concentration of 50% from 1989.

n = 21

1965 - 5%	1981 - 5%	1985 - 5%	1988 - 5%
1966 - 5%	1983 - 5%	1986 - 5%	1989 - 50%
1976 - 5%	1984 - 5%	1987 - 5%	

Six (28.6%) of the respondents were male, 14 (66.7%) female, and one (4.8%) gave no indication. Respondents to the fall questionnaire represented 15 four-year transfer institutions as subsequently summed:

College	No. Students	Program	F
SUNY Brockport	3 (14.3%)	Criminal Justice	3
Empire State	2 (9.5%)	-----	-
SUNY New Paltz	2 (9.5%)	Business Administration, Accounting	1
		Political Science	1
Siena College	2 (9.5%)	Accounting	1
		Marketing & Management	1
SUNY Utica/Rome	2 (9.5%)	Nursing	1
		Accounting	1
SUNY Plattsburgh	1 (4.8%)	Accounting	1
SUNY Purchase	1 (4.8%)	Photography	1
SUNY Binghamton	1 (4.8%)	Nursing (did not attend because of no financial aid	-
SUNY Albany	1 (4.8%)	Accounting	1
Russell Sage	1 (4.8%)	Nursing	1
Union College	1 (4.8%)	Civil Engineering	1
St. Rose	1 (4.8%)	Criminal Justice	1
Mount St. Mary's	1 (4.8%)	Business Management	1
Ramapo College, NJ	2 (9.5%)	Accounting	2
R.I. Sch. of Design	1 (4.8%)	Graphic Design	1

Thirty percent (30%) of students responded affirmatively to the question, "Now that you are registered in the four-year degree program, which course credits were not accepted for transfer?" The responses are summarized by college and by individual case.

College	Courses Not Accepted	Credit Hours
Siena College	Technical Math	4
	Intermediate Algebra	3
Siena College	Advanced Algebra	3
	PE	2
	Federal Income Tax Acct.	3
	Comp. Applic. Acct.	2
	Trigonometry	3
	Principles Business	3
Union	Civ. Eng. Applic.	2
	Technical Mathematics	4
	Statics & Strength of Materials	4
	Tech. Physics I and II	4 each
	Structures I/II	3 each
	Hydraulics & Drainage	3
	Soil and Foundations	3
	Highway Design	3
SUNY Purchase	Video Prod.	4
	Fund. Speech	4
	Commercial Photo.	Several
	Broadcasting	1
	Photo Illus.	4
	Horseback	1
Ramapo, NJ	Real Estate	4
	Basic Algebra	3
SUNY Albany	Income Tax Acct.	3
	Cost Acct.	3
	Gov. Acct.	3
	Inter. Acct. I & II	3/3
	English Grammar	3
	Business Org. & Mgmt.	3
	Typing	3
	Business Math.	3
Rhode Island School of Design	Principles of Marketing	3
	Physical Education Courses	6

Students were also asked to indicate what freshman or sophomore level courses, if any, they have to take because of unavailability at their home community college. Fourteen students (67%) indicated None, four (19%) responded affirmatively and the courses identified included: Introduction to Social Psychology, Mathematics of Finance, Finance Management, Foundation Drawing, and Western Art and Architectural History I. Further, students were asked if any credits were disallowed or if additional courses that had been previously unknown to them were disallowed once they arrived on campus. Fifteen (71%) students indicated that there were no such surprises. One indicated "Yes" and explained enrollment in an out-of-state four-year institution at which the physical education requirement could not be fulfilled because the community college did not record physical education.

Students were requested to assume that they had four full semesters of courses from the community college, and to estimate how many more semesters they anticipate it will take to earn their bachelor's degree on a full-time basis. Ten (47.6%) indicated four semesters; four (23.8%) five semesters; and two (9.5%) six semesters.

Identification of college staff/individuals on the four-year campus, by title, that had been particularly helpful or not helpful was requested. The Admissions Office staff, Registration staff, Financial Aids Office staff, Faculty and Other Students were identified most frequently as being helpful. The frequency of their responses are summed:

Position	Helpful	Not Helpful	No Interaction
Admissions Office	15 (75%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)
Financial Aids	12 (60%)	2 (10%)	3 (15%)
Registration Staff	14 (70%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)
Counselor	5 (25%)	2 (10%)	11 (55%)
Custodian	1 (5%)	-	15 (75%)
Faculty	12 (57%)	-	18 (90%)
Administrator	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	12 (60%)
Secretary	6 (30%)	1 (5%)	11 (55%)
Public Safety	2 (15%)	2 (10%)	13 (65%)
Housing Staff	6 (30%)	2 (10%)	8 (40%)
RA's	7 (35%)	2 (10%)	6 (30%)
Other Students	15 (71%)	-	-

When respondents were asked whether they were satisfied with their transfer decisions, 16 (76.2%) responded affirmatively, 2 (9.5%) negatively, and no response 14.3%. The explanation given by the negative respondents included a lack of available housing, a preference for an institution with a better reputation but not able to afford it, and no longer being sure about actually wanting a bachelor's degree.

Respondents were requested to describe how the transfer experience might have been improved for them either by the community college or the four-year college. These responses are summarized by college level as follows:

Improve Transfer

Community College:

4 (25%) Each department/curriculum should have transfer seminar to discuss options/questions; more counseling on requirements/ emphasize transfer requirements
2 (10%) More scholarship information/help available
1 (5%) More efficient transcript mailing
1 (5%) Inaccurate information from four-year institution
1 (5%) A.A.S. degree did not fulfill core requirements at New Paltz; (ex. Spanish - no as lower, Phil. of Lang. as upper)

Four-Year College:

5% Better 1-on-1 conference discussing requirements for 4-year degree
5% More information on transportation and what needed for dorm
5% Arrive later
5% Offer challenge courses for required freshman/sophomore courses, as A.A.S. grad, most material has been learned and put to use
5% Clear explanation of material
5% More interaction with advisor
5% Better organized admission/registration process
5% Unorganized registering, more credits transferred than not
5% Be allowed to register with other students
5% More information on what to take at community college
5% Improve financial aids, provide answers

Several students indicated that no problems had been encountered and offered no recommendation but indicated that the transfer went well. As shown, the most frequent recommendations were related to availability of more, and more accurate, information.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to gain information about the transfer experience of A.A.S. degree recipients because of the increasing frequency of A.A.S. degree holder transfers. Recent statistics from SUNY Central Administration reporting on fall 1990 show that of 5,707 transfers into SUNY colleges and universities with an associate degree, 2,439 held an A.A.S. or A.O.S. degree compared to 3,268 with an A.A. or A.S. degree (Institutional Research Report #6-91).

While the number of responses to this pilot-like study are small, the findings should be somewhat indicative of the experiences of the general population. Most respondents reported that they did not have a choice (A.S. or A.A.S.) in degree once they had selected their program. Another major finding is that a majority of students made their transfer decision during the first year of study. These two outcomes suggest that two-year colleges may have a limited window of opportunity to assist A.A.S. degree students in the transfer process, if they make their plans known.

For graduates of programs not designed for transfer, the results also suggest that the problems associated with transfer are not that severe except in the field of business where transfer problems have existed for some time. Two independent colleges also stood out in terms of non-acceptance of selected courses. However, a majority of the respondents indicated no problems or surprises and only a small percentage indicated dissatisfaction with the transfer decision. There will always be a need for more and more accurate information about transfer and for students contemplating transfer to find out as much as possible about existing transfer articulation agreements.

It appears that two-year college faculty and transfer counselors would do a service to students if they would make more pointed efforts to locate A.A.S. program students who plan to transfer and work with them to smooth the individual problems. The so-called "terminal" degree is no longer only employment-directed in the minds of many students, and unless parallel A.S.-A.A.S. programs exist, additional services will be needed by increasing numbers of A.A.S. students who are finding academic success and seeking to continue their education in a bachelor's degree program.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TRANSFERRING STUDENTS
FROM SUNY TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

APPENDIX A

This questionnaire is designed to collect information about the transfer process from graduates of two-year colleges with Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degrees. We are seeking information from students at 12 different colleges at two time points, just before graduation and in September when the transfer has been completed.

Your responses will not be linked to you or reported by name. However, we are requesting your name and address in order to mail the follow-up questionnaire to you in September.

The results of the survey will be reported to the State Education Department and college administrators to assist in considerations of transfer policy and practice. We sincerely appreciate your help in providing basic information from your own experience.

_____ _____
College Major/Curriculum/Program

1a. When you first enrolled in your A.A.S. degree program, did you have a choice between A.S. and A.A.S. degree programs in your field of study?

___ Yes ___ No

b. If yes, why did you select or eventually end up in an A.A.S. degree program?

_____

_____

2a. When did you make the decision to continue for a bachelor's degree?

___ first semester ___ second semester ___ third semester

___ fourth semester ___ other, describe: _____

b. What was the major reason you decided to go on for a bachelor's degree?

_____

_____

c. Was there a person(s) who helped you make the decision? Please identify and explain:

_____

3a. Please name the college you will be entering in the fall: _____

and your major/program: _____

b. What was the primary reason you chose this four-year college? _____

_____

c. Please identify any other colleges you considered. _____

_____ _____

4. Have you encountered problems or difficulties regarding your plans to transfer?

___ Yes ___ No

If yes, briefly describe regarding:

Courses or program _____

Finances _____

Personal/family _____

Other _____

5. At this time, do you know whether all of your associate degree credits will be accepted? Please explain:

_____

_____

6. Do you have any advice for students in your A.A.S. program who might consider transferring and seeking a bachelor's degree?

_____

_____

- -

Thank you very much for your assistance.

We would like to contact you in September, after you have transferred, to gather more information about your experience. If you will agree to answer a letter, please complete the information below.

_____ _____

Name College in September 1991

Address for mailing purposes in September 1991: _____

_____

_____

_____

Optional information:

Year graduated from high school _____ Gender: male ___

female ___

- -

Please use the attached envelope to return this form to:

Two Year College Development Center
Husted 208, University at Albany
135 Western Avenue
Albany NY 12222

UNIVERSITY AT
ALBANY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Two Year College Development Ce
518 442-5

APPENDIX B

September 4, 1991

Follow-Up Questionnaire for Students
Transferring from SUNY Two-Year Colleges

[redacted]

Husted
Albany, New Y
12

Dear SUNY Community College Transfer Student,

During the spring semester you responded to a questionnaire that asked about your plans and problems regarding continuing college towards a bachelor's degree and you agreed to answer a follow-up request in September. We appreciate your cooperation last spring and ask you to respond to the following questions and return the form to us in the envelope provided.

The responses will not be reported by person or college but will be aggregated and shared with State Education Department and college administrators to assist in considerations of transfer policy and practice. Thank you.

---

1. If the information below is not correct, please change it.

_____ College _____ Major Program

Year graduated from high school: _____ Gender: _____

2. Now that you have registered in your four-year degree program, which course credits, if any, were not accepted for transfer?

Name of course	Credits		

3. Which freshman or sophomore level courses, if any, will you have to take because they were not available at your community college? None ____

_____ Name of course(s) _____

_____ _____

4. Were any of the disallowed credits or additional courses unknown to you until you arrived on campus? Yes _____ No _____

   If yes, please explain: _____

   _____

5. Assuming you took four full semesters of courses at the community college, how many semesters will it take you to earn the bachelor's degree if you go full-time?

   4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 or more _____

6. So far, which of the following college staff have been helpful or not helpful to you? (Please check appropriate column.)

Position	Helpful	Not Helpful	No Interaction
Admissions Office	_____	_____	_____
Financial Aids	_____	_____	_____
Registration Staff	_____	_____	_____
Counselor	_____	_____	_____
Custodian	_____	_____	_____
Faculty	_____	_____	_____
Administrator	_____	_____	_____
Secretary	_____	_____	_____
Public Safety	_____	_____	_____
Housing Staff	_____	_____	_____
RA's	_____	_____	_____
Other Students	_____	_____	_____
Other: list _____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

7. Are you satisfied with your transfer decision? Yes _____ No _____

   If no, please explain: _____

   _____

8. How could the transfer experience have been improved for you?

   By community college staff: _____

   _____

   _____

   By four-year college staff: _____

   _____

   _____

Thank you for your cooperation in completing this form.
Please use enclosed envelope to return form
to us no later than September 27th.

ERIC Clearinghouse for
Junior Colleges NOV 2? 1991